

REMARKS OF REP. HENRY A. WAXMAN
UCLA BRUINS FOR ISRAEL CAMPUS LEADERS DINNER
May 25, 2010

Good evening. As a UCLA graduate and a friend of Bruins for Israel, I am honored to take part in this event. I am sorry that my work in Congress this week prevents me from joining you in person.

My career in politics started at UCLA.

The friends I made as a campus activist have been my friends and political allies throughout my whole career. I hope you can look around the room at each other and feel the same way today and many years in the future.

You each deserve tremendous credit for the passion, talent, and commitment that you bring to the organizations you represent, the causes you believe in, and to the greater community at UCLA and beyond.

This year, as Israel reaches its 62nd birthday, we celebrate a country that is a vibrant democracy that extends fundamental freedoms to all its citizens. It is a diverse nation that has engineered immense economic prosperity for its people.

Today, Israel has the second largest number of technology startup companies in the world, after the United States. Its GDP now rivals countries in Europe and just this month Israel was invited to join the OECD.

But it is also a time of great anxiety. While many of the Arab and Muslim nations have refused to recognize Israel and some have vowed to destroy it, Iran is the number one threat to its existence. Iran is ramping up efforts to obtain nuclear weapons and its President, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, has threatened to wipe Israel off the map.

Hezbollah, which is supported by Iran, is arming itself with Scud missiles capable of reaching any part of Israel's population – far beyond the areas near the Israel-Lebanon border.

Gilad Shalit, an Israeli soldier who was just about your age when he was kidnapped by Hamas, remains in captivity.

Even though Israel withdrew from all of Gaza nearly 5 years ago and the world community sought to invest billions of dollars for its economic development, Gaza has been taken over by Hamas as a terrorist state and a launching pad for attacks on Israel. In the coming months the United Nations General Assembly will again seek action on the flawed, inaccurate, and biased Goldstone Report on the war in Gaza, which to Israelis means that it will be held as an international criminal state because it sought to defend itself.

Behind what you read in the newspapers, I know that the United States is working very closely with Israel to meet and resolve all of these challenges.

I know that President Obama is committed to Israel's security and to a future in which Arabs and Israelis can live and work side by side in peace.

The real issue is that Israel needs partners to make peace – in the Palestinian government and society. Even as the United States has pushed for talks between Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and Israel, Abbas is in a civil war with Hamas, which has vowed never to make peace with Israel or settle for a two-state solution.

Don't be fooled by the rhetoric. There is one – and only one – meaning to the call for a "one-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A “one-state” solution means simply the end of Israel, because it would no longer be a homeland for the Jewish people.

Only a two-state solution embraces a future for Jews and Palestinians to live side by side in peace and security.

Anyone can disagree with Israel’s policies and I have done so on many occasions. We are all free to express that disagreement, but it is amazing to me that are so many who have bought into the idea that Israel and only Israel should be censured or boycotted for human rights abuses.

No one hears about the suppression of women’s rights in a country like Iran. No one hears about countless political prisoners in Libya, which by the way was recently elected to the U.N. Human Rights Council. No one has been fixated on campaigns against nations that keep its citizens in abject poverty, commit genocide, and exhibit no tolerance of minorities, diversity or dissent. Only Israel is singled out.

This is what we face with divestment initiatives that single out Israel. I am troubled that there are nearly a dozen divestment campaigns under consideration by universities and student governments around the country – including a number here in California.

To its credit, the UC Board of Regents recently reaffirmed its position rejecting these campaigns as unfair attempts to isolate Israel. The Regents’ statement made clear that divestment from a foreign government should be reserved for the grave instances, such as when a regime is committing acts of genocide, such as in the case of Sudan.

The role of groups like Bruins for Israel is more important than ever to keep students informed and focused on policies grounded in facts, in history and principle.

The partnerships and relationships being fostered by events like this are the reason that UCLA has not suffered the division and hostility now plaguing other campuses in the UC system over this issue.

I hope your efforts continue and I want to thank all of you for your contribution as USAC representatives, Democrats and Republicans, pro-Israel Bruins, and UCLA leaders of all stripes.

Keep up your good work. I hope to be with you in the future not only as a supporter of your efforts, but present at the next event when you are all gathered.

Thank you so much for this chance to visit with you.